

Asheville City Council  
Planning and Economic Development Committee

11:30 a.m., January 21, 2009  
Economic Development Office Conference Room

**Minutes**

Present: Councilwoman Robin Cape, Chair; Vice-Mayor Jan Davis; Councilman Bill Russell

Staff: Gary Jackson, Sam Powers, Sasha Vrtunski, Cathy Ball, Shannon Tuch, Judy Daniel, Bob Oast

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on January 21, 2009, at 29 Haywood Street. Chair Cape called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes from the November 19, 2008, meeting were approved as written.

**2. Updates**

**Downtown Master Plan**

Sasha Vrtunski, Project Manager, gave the update. She reported that from October to December, there has been a "small group process" to work on gaining support for the Draft Plan. Individuals in this group were selected on the basis of the differences of the opinions. They have met six times, and have used services provided by the Mediation Center, free of charge. The document they produce will be attached to the Draft Master Plan presented to City Council.

An implementation plan is also being developed, to chart how to move forward through the various reviews leading to a City Council presentation.

A public meeting was held on January 15<sup>th</sup>, with approximately 190 people in attendance, to present the Draft Downtown Master Plan. A three week comment period is now underway, ending February 6<sup>th</sup>. Information on the draft plan and public comment documents are available at the YMI, Pack Library and the Office of Economic Development.

The final plan is expected to be presented to the Planning and Zoning Committee on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and to City Council later in March.

**RFP**

Sam Powers, Economic Development Director, gave the update.

1) Congress/Gaston: Rezoning is complete for the project site. Next steps involve working with MHO and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts on the Greenway component

of the project. City Engineering has taken on the responsibility of applying CBDG funds, which will provide a key public space to the site.

2) Aston Gateway/Park Maintenance facility: There continue to be multiple layers to this project. The Kathy Connor, Superintendent of Parks, Nikki Reid, Real Estate Manager for the City, and Stephanie Monson, Urban Planner with the Office of Economic Development, are examining the logistical details on how to move forward with the relocation of the park maintenance facility to the Armory, and related issues. They anticipate presenting a timeline by the end of January, and will then go back to MHO to continue working with them to create more density on the site.

3) Eagle Market Street: The Eagle Market Development Corporation is continuing dialogue with the developer. The market downtown has affected this site. The developer needed, as has been given, an exclusive right to negotiate on the project to take to financial institutions. They are looking at how to resize project, and what makes most sense.

4) Haywood Street: Staff is negotiating a draft development agreement with McKibbin Hotel group. A letter will be sent to Bud Hansbury reinforcing Council's invitation to partner with the Basilica to develop the public space owned by the Basilica.

#### **Stormwater Ordinance:**

Cathy Ball, Engineering Director, gave the update. In August of 2007, a new stormwater ordinance was passed. As this ordinance went through the approval process quickly, the City committed to going back and exploring points, such as buffer and inspection requirements, and penalties and fines of the ordinance, that were immediately identified as problematic. A large stakeholder group was established, and has met many times. To date, this group has not been able to come to a consensus on recommendations to present to Council. The intent at this point is to present to Council with an April/May timeframe, and attach a minority report addressing concerns on which a consensus was not reached.

### **3. Status Reports**

#### **Standard Specifications and Details Manual**

Cathy Ball gave the update. The current manual was adopted in 1997. An overhaul is needed to take into consideration economic changes. It is what we have been applying, reflecting other ordinances that have been adopted, not policy changes. The updated manual reflects low impact development, steep slope standards, not requiring sidewalks so as not to unnecessarily disturb the environment, and helps neighborhood communities understand what the technical communities are doing.

A draft went to staff in December, after input from professionals and the general public who use this document every day. The draft will be put out for public comment in two weeks, with two months to comment. The intent is to wrap up the project by the end of June, after going to P&Z and City Council.

#### **UDO and Policy Changes Relating to Current Economic Conditions**

Gary Jackson, City Manager, reported that discussions of the UDO and suggested policy changes relating to the current economic conditions have taken place during meetings of CIBO, the Kitchen Cabinet and the City Manager's Development Forum. Staff is recommending that they be allowed to grant permits when non-public safety requirements are in place, and extending the life of plans and permits when there isn't level of activity as in past. Staff is also recommending a reconfiguration of temporary signage requirements. Feedback from the various groups has been very positive, with continued requests for simply less regulation. Staff is looking for policy direction from Council as to what are Council is willing to compromise on. Whatever is eventually presented to Council will not be framed as temporary, but as supporting existing policy while adding some flexibility.

#### **4. Presentations**

#### **5. Public Comment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.